

MEMORANDUM

TO: Phil Sachtleben, Legislative Services Agency

FROM: Indiana Tourism Council

DATE: November 1, 2005

RE: School Start Date

This memo and attachments are being sent to you in response to the request from the Legislative Council regarding identifying issues surrounding the ramifications of moving the school start date closer to Labor Day.

The Tourism Council met on September 27, 2005 where the school start date issue was discussed. The group passed the following position statement: John Chidester motioned to reaffirm the Tourism Council support of a later school start date, Randy Ballinger seconded and the motion carried. Vote total: 16 yes, 5 abstained, 1 No. A separate school start work group met immediately following the council meeting and identified issues that would affect school start date changes.

Topics discussed:

The entire group was updated regarding the last time the Tourism Council addressed the school start issue. At the December 2, 1999 meeting, the Tourism Council ratified a motion that the Council endorse a school start date after Labor Day. In the 2000 Tourism Council Strategic Plan, the Council identified a unified post-Labor Day school opening as one of their goals. The political and state government climate did not support this goal moving forward and it was shelved for several years.

Three bills were filed in the 2005 session regarding a change in the school start date. Council members anticipate that more will be filed in 2006.

Several Midwestern states have passed legislation mandating a school start date closer to Labor Day and several more are investigating its impact (MN, TX, NC, SC, PA).

- Michigan – passed school start date legislation in September 2005
- Wisconsin – passed school start date legislation four years ago

Council members report:

- The labor force declines sharply August 1 when schools start August 15.
- Retail operations are affected by school start date.
- University towns struggle with school start dates in those communities with university employees who have kids in local schools.
- Year round sports, band, travel teams, other extracurricular activities all impact summer vacation time for families.
- The ISTEP test is currently held in the fall. Schools may oppose a later school start as it gives them less time to prepare. If ISTEP is moved to the spring, would the schools support a later school start? Legislative members are discussing this with Governor.
- Changing from the current regulation of 180 instructional days to the appropriate instructional hours was a key factor for Michigan getting their law changed. Should Indiana consider this change?
- Will schools be looking at making changes based on economic factors (fuel costs, hours in a day of instruction)?
- Maintaining local control is one argument heard against discussion of school start – Indiana Festival Association representative spoke at the meeting that his group favors local control and worries that legislative change would preclude local school systems from making their own calendar decisions.
- The negative economic impact data needs to be communicated as well as any positive signs of economics of later start.
- Partners interested in this issue known at this time include: Children's Museum, Conner Prairie, Indiana State Fair, Farm Bureau, Holiday World, Indiana Beach, Indiana Hotel & Lodging Association, Restaurant & Hospitality Association of Indiana, Indiana Bed & Breakfast Association, Indiana Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Indiana Marine Trades

Other information/Attachments:

Michigan school start website – www.parentsforfamilyvacations.org

Texans for a Traditional School year – www.traditionalschoolyear.org

Study results and methodology from Michigan regarding economic impact

Packet from the September 27 meeting re: web resources and activity in other states

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the school start date issue. The Tourism Council is available to assist you as this issue is examined further.

School Start Date Overview Packet

The Indiana Tourism Council has been charged by the Legislative Council to study the impact of school start dates in Indiana. The Council has been asked to give its input to Phil Sachtleben, Executive Director of the Legislative Services Agency, in October.

Several states have addressed this issue legislatively and several more are investigating its impact (MI, WI, MN, TX, NC, SC, PA). This packet gives you some background information on the issue including previous work done by the Tourism Council in 2000.

Please review this material as we will be discussing the opportunities and challenges presented to our industry regarding this issue. In addition to the articles here, there is plenty of information available online to help you get up to speed on school start issues (one Michigan resource is www.parentsforfamilyvacations.org). At the meeting, several Council members will present information regarding activities in which their own industry groups have participated.

Previous Tourism Council Work

At the December 2, 1999 meeting, the Tourism Council ratified a motion that the Council endorse a school start date after Labor Day.

In the 2000 Tourism Council Strategic plan, the Council identified a unified post-Labor Day school opening as one of their goals. They wrote the following objectives and strategies:

Objective A – Explore the opportunities for a post-Labor Day school start

Strategies

- Gather data from other states (Virginia, Texas, Wisconsin, Minnesota)
- Consider hosting a multi-state forum to discuss what has worked and what hasn't

Objective B – Research the general public's opinion on the issue

Rationale

- Identifies whether the Council will find support from the masses
- Initial data provides a basis to begin making contacts with legislators and other stakeholders
- Begins to suggest an issue to the masses that they may not have considered

Objective C – Identify and begin contacting stakeholders

- Among traditional players (teachers & PTOs)
- Among the non-traditional (agriculture)

Objective D – Prepare a position paper on the social and economic ramifications of the proposal

Recommendations

- Incorporate as much social/family data as possible (the Tarlowe report)
- Explain the inability of families to travel together during June & June due to organized activities
- Stress that this is about families
- Try to position this as far more than an economic issue (opposition and media will focus on money)

Texas schools pay more to cool schools, study shows

*Later start to school year could save millions for teachers,
academic aid*

By Tina Bruno

Editors note: Tina Bruno is executive director of Texans for a Traditional School Year.

Most of us don't mind paying property taxes when we know the money is going to better the education of our children, but we expect school administrators and school board members to be good stewards of our money. Data collected from Texas schools and schools across the nation shows that starting classes in August is not fiscally responsible and could be taking money away from academic instruction and teacher benefits.

In December 2002, the **Texas Comptroller issued a special report** that focused on the increased cost of the early August school start date. The report found that the "present structure of the school year may also be costing districts as much as \$10 million in higher cooling costs each year."

That amount of money was shocking to many of us. But it's hard to understand just how it affects a local school system. A local perspective on the costs of the early August school start date was required.

Texans for a Traditional School Year surveyed school systems across the state. Of the 40 that responded, the difference in their utility bills in August verses May was more than \$5.7 million. Larger school districts paid as much as \$551,000 more for August energy than they did in May.

Even if a district could **save a mere \$40,000 a year** by pushing back the start of school from the state-recommended week of August 21 to the day after Labor Day, would it be worth it?

To me the answer is a simple YES. Why? Veteran teachers report that with \$40,000, districts could pay retired teachers \$25 an hour to provide 1,600 hours of small group and individualized tutoring for students.

If each teacher worked with groups of four children for one hour, 6,400 tutoring slots would be available annually. So students who don't immediately catch onto a subject wouldn't have to wait to get extra help. Students could get help within a few days of needing it, and would be able to build on the skills throughout the rest of the year. Kids who were just a few points shy of passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) would have been in a better position to pass the test the first

time around with a few months of small group tutoring.

High school students must pass the 11th-grade TAKS to graduate high school. Third graders who didn't pass the TAKS last year won't be allowed into the next grade. And that no-promotion policy will be enforced in more grades in the years to come.

With the stakes so high, don't we owe it to our children to use as many dollars as possible for their instruction?

Even if you don't see a need for small group tutoring, \$40,000 could purchase additional classroom supplies and more up-to-date materials for our teachers. The money could buy 22 new computers for our schools – at the average consumer price.

Texas schools aren't the only ones with budget shortfalls, but we seem to be missing the boat by not thinking "outside the box" about ways to save money and increase classroom spending.

Plagued with the same budget shortfall as many Texas schools, the Tulsa School District made a bold decision last year. Officials in Oklahoma's largest school system figured that by pushing back the start of the school year from August 19 to the day after Labor Day, the district would save a minimum of \$200,000. The district now says the simple move saved between \$300,000 to \$400,000.

"There's no doubt that not holding class during the hottest month of the year made a big difference," said John Hamill, spokesman for Tulsa Public Schools. "We have saved a goodly amount of money this year by starting school two weeks later than we had been and through routine energy conservation awareness."

In Tulsa, the September school start date didn't seem to hurt preparation for that state's standardized exam. "We didn't see an appreciable slippage of state test scores in our district," Hamill added.

According to the web site of the American College Test, one of the nation's most widely used college entrance exams, students in only seven states earned average composite scores of 22 or better on the 2002 ACT Exam. None of the other 43 states earned a higher composite score. Most of those seven top-scoring states administer mid-term exams after the winter break and begin school in the later part of August or early September.

The research has been completed, the numbers are in. When you start school does not impact academic performance. But our school calendars could be taking money away from academic instruction – the one area that we all agree has a real impact on student performance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Would a later school start date produce additional state tax revenue and cost savings that could be used toward funding public schools?

According to Chairman Grusendorf, post-Labor Day school start date would save taxpayers more than \$85 million in school district costs. Research indicates that Texas' early school-start dates also cost Texas over \$392 million dollars annually in summer travel revenue -- the taxes on such activity could be used to help fund public schools.

Where exactly are the potential savings from a later school start date?

For local school districts, the savings would be lower energy costs. Early school start dates require local school districts to pay the high August cooling costs. It is twice as expensive in Texas to cool schools in August than it is in May. For example, the August 5 school start date implemented in Birdville ISD cost that district \$40,500 more annually in cooling costs than a September 1 school start date. With this same concern, Tulsa, Oklahoma Public Schools pushed back their schools start date from August 19 to post-Labor Day. Tulsa administrators estimate the move saved the district \$500,000 in utility costs.

Wouldn't starting school later just cause schools to end later and thus eliminate any savings?

Even if a school district simply moved the August school days to May and June, districts would still enjoy a significant utilities cost savings. A recent report estimates electricity charges, per student, per day to be: \$0.89 in August, \$0.45 in May and \$0.78 in June. For example, if the following school district's began instruction in September instead of on August 16, 2004, the below amounts could have been saved in utility costs annually: Houston ISD -- \$418,768; Dallas ISD -- \$319,297; Arlington ISD -- \$122,760; Brownsville ISD -- \$92,562; Conroe ISD -- \$79,992. The savings would be even greater for school districts that combined a later school start date with more efficient scheduling of teacher training days and school holiday vacation days to coincided more closely with vacation times available to Texas working parents.

What changes would schools typically need to make in order to start post-Labor Day?

The only change a school district would need to make with a post-Labor day start date would be to move the first semester exams to after the winter break -- if the district wanted to keep an equal number of days of instruction in each semester.

Is there an academic detriment to a post-Labor Day start date or giving first semester exams after the winter break?

Research shows that the school calendar configuration does not impact academic performance. In fact, a majority of the top 10 academic states in the nation began school in late-August or early-September and administered first semester finals after the winter break this year. For example, top-rated Carroll ISD has approved a 2005-06 school calendar with a start date of August 29 and will administer first semester exams after the winter break. A School Start Date Task Force, chaired by Dr. William Cunningham, Former Chancellor of the UT Systems presented research supporting the academic benefits of administering end-of-semester exams after the Winter Break. The research found that long-term learning is enhanced by the "spacing effect" when

students can review and study material that they have been presented after an instructional break.

Shouldn't the school calendar be a matter of local control?

The state would only be setting a beginning date for schools. All other calendar decisions will be left to the school board and community to decide. Local control should factor in the desire of most Texas parents. A recent survey of over 42,000 Texans showed the majority supported a school start date of post-Labor Day.

Do later school start dates present problems with the administration of school athletic practices?

No. The University Interscholastic League sets a schedule as to when athletic practices may begin. A uniform school start date would put all Texas high school athletic teams on the same footing as to the number of hours practiced before the first game.

How would a later school start date impact teacher training and time off during the school year?

Regardless of the start date for school, teacher contracts would include 187 days that they commit to the district. School districts will continue to have control as to teacher work days, professional development and all school holidays.

Would there be exemptions for schools that have year-round programs from the recommended post-Labor school start date?

Current law "grandfathers" all schools that were operating under a year-round school calendar when the law was enacted. Even without the "grandfather" clause, school districts wishing to operate under a year-round school calendar will be able to do so – the only difference would be the starting date.

***For More Information: Tina Bruno, Executive Director
Texans for a Traditional School Year
(210) 559-5277***

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 14, 2005

Chairman Alan Sanborn
Committee on Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform
Michigan Senate
Post Office Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Honorable Chairman Alan Sanborn and Committee Members,

I have carefully reviewed the attached analysis of the economic impact of HB 4803 and deem it to be sound and of high quality. In fact, I arrived at approximately similar projections using historical sales and use taxes as a base. In forecasting, it is always useful in assessing the quality of a forecast to employ alternative analysis where possible. Thus, the attached analysis meets both the test for internal validity as well as that of external validity.

Projecting the economic benefits from enactment of HB 4803- Post Labor Day Schools is inherently a complex undertaking, as it is for most legislation since it is impossible to predict precisely how consumers will respond to changed circumstances. Hence, most projections of this type are based upon extrapolations of historical data and a set of assumptions necessary to account for factors likely to impact the basic extrapolation upward or downward. While the accuracy of the projection cannot be judged a priori, a careful review of the methods and assumptions employed will reveal the quality of projection.

However, there are two significant economic benefits that are not covered in this analysis which, while impossible to quantify, should be weighed in considering its importance to Michigan residents. The more important of these two additional benefits is that which accrues to the families with children that are able to take advantage of the change to vacation in late summer. Exactly how much these families would be willing to pay for this opportunity to enjoy all that Michigan has to offer in late August is likely to far exceed the level of benefit projected in the analysis reviewed. The second benefit not addressed is that associated with added profit captured by Michigan tourism businesses, especially those that garner the majority of their sales during the short summer season. Adding only two weeks to the peak season for these businesses will increase their sales by as much as 10% and their profits by even more since their fixed costs would be spread over a larger sales base. An important spin off from these added profits is that they would serve to stimulate new and expanded tourism business development which would in turn attract more tourist business across all seasons of the year. Thus, imbedded in this legislation is a long-term economic development element that will create new jobs and tax revenues in addition to the short term increases projected in the attached analysis.

Sincerely,

Donald F. Holecek
Professor
Director of Michigan Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center



CARRS

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---Analysis---

**Economic Benefits Derived from
Enactment of HB 4803
Post Labor Day Schools**

With an unemployment rate that is second only to that of Mississippi, it's no secret that Michigan's economy still lags well behind the rest of the country. But there are significant, widely popular and politically attractive means by which Michigan policymakers can positively address such problems.

Michigan's Tourism industry is utterly dependent on discretionary spending for its financial outcomes. Such spending is impacted by weather, world events, gas prices, economic conditions, unemployment levels and overall consumer confidence. This means that state tax revenues derived from tourism are equally tied to factors over which, in many cases, state policymakers have little or no control.

As such, seizing opportunities to effect beneficial change over factors we can control becomes all the more important. HB 4803 represents just such an opportunity. Passage of HB 4803 represents both a popular and inexpensive means to provide a significant boost to the state's economy.

An EPIC/MRA poll recently found that 63% of voters supported legislation to require state schools to open after Labor Day with only 22% opposed. In fact, 67% of parents of school age children support such a change. However, the economic impact of this legislation provides far more compelling reasons to pass HB 4803.

Based on figures validated by Michigan State University's Travel, Tourism & Recreation Resource Center, passage of HB 4803 will provide an increase of \$132 million in statewide economic activity and increase overall state tax revenues by at least \$10 million. Such an increase in tourism sales would provide a sorely needed boost to Michigan's economy, as well as its second largest industry which is just coming off one of the worst four year periods in its history.

In summation, passage of HB 4803 is projected to generate an additional:

- * • **\$132 million in statewide economic activity**
- **\$10 million dollars in total tax revenues to the State.**

- **\$7.92 million - additional tourism sales tax**
- **\$ 365,000 - projected new Michigan income tax**
- **\$1.55 million - new indirect tax revenue**
- **\$ 288,000 - new induced tax revenue**

\$10,123,000.00 – Total tax revenues derived from passage of HB 4803

Methodology

- Michigan tourism is a \$16 billion per year industry directly supporting 188,000 jobs – indirectly supporting 240,000 jobs.
- 43% of all tourism revenue is generated in June, July and August.
- $43\% \times \$16 \text{ billion} = \$6.88 \text{ billion (summer)} \div 92 \text{ days} = \$75 \text{ million per summer day.}$
- $\$16 \text{ billion minus } \$6.88 \text{ billion (summer)} = \$9.12 \text{ billion non-summer (average) days.}$
- $\$9.12 \text{ billion} \div 273 \text{ (average days)} = \$33 \text{ million per average day}$
- $\$75 \text{ million less } \$33 \text{ million} = \$42 \text{ million difference from changing a 'summer' day to an 'average' day.}$

The last available research (1997) showed that as many as 70% of all Michigan K-12 schools started before Labor Day, 30% after. Assume that the average Michigan school starting date (for the 70%) is August 22, 2005 (some sooner, some later) - This effectively shortens the summer vacation season by 15 days less 4 weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) and 2 Holiday days (September 2 & 5) = 9 days reduced from 'summer' to 'average'.

- $9 \text{ lost summer days} \times \$42 \text{ million (difference)} = \$378 \text{ million negative tourism expenditure impact (if all schools started before Labor Day)}$
- $\$378 \text{ million} \times 70\% \text{ (adjustment for the 30\% of Post Labor Day schools)} = \$265 \text{ million lost tourism expenditures before adjustments.}$

Adjustment assumptions: 1) 35% of all Michigan travel is to visit friends and relatives (VFR) - severely impacted when school starts. 2) 35% of all travel to Michigan is from outside of the state – generally not impacted by school starts. 3) 57% of summer trips are with school age children – ending midweek vacations for those Michigan families. 4) Some older couples and savvy travelers wait schools start to travel adding strength to the 9 'average' days 5) Special incentives and reduced prices deflate the average travel expenditures during this period. 6) For the sake of argument we will assume that the two holiday and four weekend days will maintain the full revenue strength of a 'summer' day.

Given the above we may extrapolate that the non-holiday midweek days prior to Labor Day, that school is in session, will generate revenue halfway between 'summer' and 'average', therefore:

- $\$265 \text{ million (lost revenue)} \times 50\% \text{ adjustment assumptions} = \132 million.
- $\$132 \text{ million} \times 6\% \text{ (sales \& use tax)} = \mathbf{\$7.92 \text{ million lost state tax revenue}}$

A conservative estimate of the seasonal labor force of those impacted by the school opening dates is 5% (students, teachers, parents, etc.). Most will leave their employment at least prior to the weekend prior to school opening (August 19, 2005) = 19 not lost working days – 15 net work days (5 days per week).

- 188,000 employees X 5% = 9,400 employees
- 9,400 X 15 days = 141,000 days X 8 hours per day = 1,128,000 lost hours
- 1,128,000 X \$8.50 per hour = \$9.6 million in unpaid wages
- \$9.6 million X 3.8% Michigan income tax rate = **\$365,000 unpaid MIT**
- SUT is not included as an impact to the state treasury

The indirect multipliers are detailed in the footnote

- \$129 million (lost sales revenue) X est. 10% Michigan 'capture rate X 2.0 indirect effect multiplier = \$25.8 million X 6% (sales & use tax) = **\$1.55 million lost indirect tax revenue**
- \$9.6 million in unpaid wages less est. 75% dedicated expenses (rent, taxes, savings, etc.) = \$2.4 million lost discretionary spending X 2.0 induced effect multiplier = \$4.8 million X 6% = **\$288,000 lost induced tax revenue**

Footnotes:

The following is an excerpt from

HYPERLINK "<http://www.msu.edu/user/stynes>"

www.msu.edu/user/stynes

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Input-Output Analysis Terminology

A number of special economic impact terms arise from the methods used to estimate impacts. The most widely accepted approaches are based on input-output models. An input-output model is a representation of the flows of economic activity within a region. The model captures what each business or sector must purchase from every other sector in order to produce a dollar's worth of goods or services. Using such a model, flows of economic activity associated with any change in spending may be traced either forwards (spending generating income which induces further spending) or backwards (visitor purchases of meals leads restaurants to purchase additional inputs -- groceries, utilities, etc.). By tracing these linkages between sectors, input-output models can estimate secondary effects of visitor spending, often captured in the form of multipliers. Popular input-output modeling systems include IMPLAN, RIMS II, and REMI. We have worked primarily with the IMPLAN system, which can estimate models and multipliers down to a county level.

Secondary effects of visitor spending are of two types: indirect and induced. Indirect effects are the changes in sales, income or jobs in sectors within the region that supply goods and services to the recreation/tourism sectors. The increased sales in linen supply firms resulting from more motel sales is an indirect effect of visitor spending. Induced effects are the increased sales within the region from household spending of the income earned in the tourism and supporting sectors. Motel or park employees spend the income they earn from tourists on housing, utilities, groceries, etc. These represent induced effects of the visitor spending. Multipliers capture the size of the secondary effects, usually expressed as a ratio of total effects to direct effects. Total effects are direct effects plus the secondary (indirect plus induced) effects. A sales multiplier of 2.0, for example, means that for every dollar received directly from a visitor, another dollar in sales is created within the region through indirect or induced effects. Multipliers are frequently misunderstood and misused and must be understood and applied with the context of the input-output models from which they are derived. A complete discussion of multipliers is beyond our scope here, but we will attempt to clarify the two most common sources of abuse by introducing the "capture rate" and discussing differences between the basic types of multipliers. Abuses largely come down to what a given type of multiplier should be multiplied by.

Multipliers should generally NOT be multiplied by total visitor spending. A sales multiplier is multiplied by a change in final demand within the region to yield the total change in sales including direct, indirect, and induced effects. Due to the way that input-output models are structured, all visitor spending does not accrue to the region as final demand. The primary problem is with retail purchases of goods. For goods that are manufactured outside of the region, only the retail margin and perhaps some portion of the wholesale and transportation margins appear as final demand for the region. The cost (producer price) to the retailer or wholesaler of the good itself leaks immediately out of the region's economy. The capture rate measures the portion of visitor spending that accrues to the region as final demand. Only the spending that is "captured" by the local economy should be multiplied by a sales multiplier.

An example should illustrate. Suppose a tourist purchases a camera for \$100 while on a trip to the region. Assume the retail margin is 30%, or \$30. Assume the wholesaler and shipper reside outside the local area, as does the company that manufactured the camera. The direct effect or final demand change in the local region is only \$30, the other \$70 immediately goes outside the region to cover cost of the good and shipping and wholesale. The \$30 that does accrue to the region is placed in the retail trade sector. The input-output model examines the businesses that the retail store buys goods and services from to estimate indirect effects and uses the portion of the \$30 that goes to wages and salaries of employees to estimate induced effects. Assume that a gross sales multiplier for the retail trade sector including both indirect and induced effects is 2.0, i.e., every dollar of sales in retail trade creates another dollar of spending through secondary effects. Notice that the total impact on the region is not two times the original \$100 in spending, but instead two times the \$30 captured by the local economy = \$60. We get the correct result if we multiply visitor spending times the capture rate times the sales multiplier. An adjusted or "effective spending multiplier" equal to the capture rate times the sales multiplier can be multiplied by visitor spending to yield the correct impact.

Besides sales multipliers, one can also produce income and employment multipliers. There are two quite distinct kinds of income and employment multipliers. Ratio type multipliers like the sales multiplier are simply the ratio of total income (or jobs) to the direct income (or jobs). These multipliers should be multiplied by the direct income or jobs to yield a total. Keynesian income or employment multipliers (also called response coefficients) are ratios of total income (or jobs) to direct sales. Keynesian multipliers estimated from an input-output model must be adjusted by the capture rate before multiplying them times visitor spending.

DETROIT NEWS
SUNDAY, JULY 17TH

OPINIONS

Sunday, July 17, 2005 | The Detroit News 19A

Should Michigan start school after Labor Day?

Shifting the beginning of school creates jobs, adds revenue and maintains local control

By STEVE YENCICH

A July 2004 poll found a landslide majority of Michigan voters support legislation requiring all schools to open after Labor Day. The EPIC-MRA poll found 60 percent of voters support and only 23 percent oppose post-Labor Day Schools.

For the first time in years, legislation enacting this important change has a great chance to be passed by legislators and signed into law by Gov. Jennifer Granholm. House Bill 4803, introduced by state Rep. Ed Gaffney, R-Grosse Pointe Farms, and co-sponsored by 39 other Democratic and Republican legislators, has overwhelming public and political support. In fact, the House just passed the measure by a resounding bipartisan vote of 69-40 and sent it to the Senate for their consideration.

After 20 years of doing nothing, why is there now hope for action on a change virtually everyone wants? The reason can be summarized in just two words: days vs. hours.

Whereas schools were once required to provide 180 days of instruction time, they now are required to provide a roughly equivalent 1,098 instructional hours. This change was made in an effort to help schools struggling to cut costs during difficult fiscal times.

As a result, schools could reduce the number of days they are open by adding just a few minutes to the length of each school day. They save money by not staffing buildings, sending buses on roads and incurring other costs. With this single money-saving change, school boards can also comply with the proposal, which requires schools to open after Labor Day.

But thanks to local control, there are other ways to go about doing so.

There are more than 1,800 provisions of state law impacting how schools operate, many of which impose mandates on local school boards. But individual districts exert local control in how they bring themselves into compliance with

these state-imposed mandates.

The same will be true if the proposal is signed into law. School boards could take a variety of steps to comply with a requirement to open after Labor Day.

They could choose to extend the length of the school year. They could choose to negotiate with teacher unions to collapse all half-day professional workshops into full-day seminars, or offer some of these workshops just before the start of the school year.

Or they could choose to do what the Pellston School District did this past year. Its school board added 20 minutes to the end of the instructional day. In doing so, they began school after Labor Day, ended before Memorial Day and still gave kids the traditional time off around Thanksgiving, Christmas, mid-winter break and spring vacation.

While others exist, these are just some of the options by which school boards can exert local control in complying with this new statute. Just as they do for dozens of other state mandates.

Passage of a post-Labor Day school start will provide millions of dollars in new tax revenues for cash-strapped state and local governments; help schools save money; allow the second largest industry in the state to provide additional jobs at a time they are desperately needed; and provide more time for family vacations during the warmest part of the summer, all the while allowing individual school districts to exert local control in how they comply with its provisions.

When one considers all this state does to support manufacturing and agriculture, passage of this proposal is almost insignificant. But doing what the public overwhelmingly wants, while boosting tourism employment and tax revenues to the state is definitely a strong step in the right direction.

Steve Yencich is president and chief executive of the Michigan Hotel, Motel & Resort Association.

Changing state school starting date meddles in local scheduling, doesn't create many jobs

By DAVID HECHE

A few years ago my kids had a hard time with our union's opposition to legislation mandating that public schools be closed the Friday of Labor Day weekend. "An extra day off, dad. How can you oppose that?"

So, I explained to them about the laws of physics. I said, "For every action there is a reaction." State law required that every school year must have at least 1,098 hours of instruction and teachers must complete 61 hours of professional development training.

"The bottom line," I told them, "is that regardless of when school starts, the number of hours you are in school is not going to change."

Soon the thought of going longer in June, having a shorter December, mid-winter or spring break made not having school the Friday of Labor Day weekend less attractive.

Now there are proponents of the state requiring that school cannot start until after Labor Day. The reason they give is the importance of Michigan's tourism industry and the perceived increase in state revenues brought about by families being able to vacation for an additional week or two before school begins.

They argue that if school begins after Labor Day more families can take a longer vacation. They also claim the industry needs students to work during that time to handle the business.

Northern Michigan is indeed a great place to vacation. This, however, is where my agreement with the proponents of the after-Labor Day mantra ends.

The later start date will not provide the workers the tourism industry says it needs. People living within the community and college-age students make up a good deal of the work force. Will the state soon mandate college and university start dates?

If the tourism industry wants families to be able to vacation in northern Michigan leading up to

Labor Day, why not advocate legislation that requires employers provide that time off for employees with families.

Or we could go to the model of some European nations, which close down for a countrywide holiday in August. Any takers?

While a mandated start date affects every family, many families do not have the financial resources to even think of taking a vacation.

How does the tourism industry benefit if other breaks are shortened or if the school year is extended to accommodate a later start date? How will the ski lodges, or businesses that serve snowmobilers fare in December and February if vacation times are shortened?

More important, start dates are a local issue and should remain a local issue for good reason. For example, in Dearborn, a school district with a large Muslim population, the school calendar recognizes the celebration days following the month of Ramadan and the holy days of Eid. The Berkley district, with a sizeable Jewish population, is closed for the Fall High Holy Days.

Other districts have community-driven circumstances that affect the school calendar as does the start date.

Requiring that schools start after Labor Day makes it far more difficult to fulfill state hour and training requirements in a manner that is educationally beneficial.

I am certain that tourism, as an important Michigan industry, will continue to grow, considering our vast array of recreational resources and beauty. But requiring schools to start after Labor Day is not the way.

It ignores the state mandates already in place. It does not consider the laws of physics. And, it denies school districts the ability to provide for the uniqueness of the communities they serve.

David Hecker is president of the Michigan Federation of Teachers & School Related Personnel.



HARRY PERRY / The Detroit News

What do you think?

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When should school start?

By JAIME BENDER, Rocky Mount Telegram

Almost every North Carolina public school starts between July 30 and Aug. 17 each year, and some business leaders and lawmakers say that trend has severely damaged one of the state's largest industries – travel and tourism.

But one area school system wants its leaders to focus on education, and administrators say moving the start date to extend vacation opportunities would do just as much damage to public schools.

Edgecombe County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Steve Stone said he's taking a proactive stand against recent proposals by coastal counties to require all schools in North Carolina to start after Labor Day and end in mid-June. Both the administration and the school board believe the calendar shift would wreak havoc on testing and would exacerbate an already staggering teacher shortage.

The school board on Monday night unanimously passed a resolution to formally oppose any legislation that mandates a post-Labor Day start date in North Carolina.

Stone said he fears that the implications of the impending law could adversely impact a number of areas, including tax revenue, teacher recruitment and block scheduling.

In the first year of implementation, faculty would receive about a month's reduction in pay, according to the N.C. School Boards Association, which is spearheading statewide efforts to oppose shifting summer vacation. That would have significant implications on city, county and state tax revenues for that calendar year.

If school begins in September, all curriculum would have to be pushed ahead, including testing, Stone said. Edgecombe County's high schools would have two weeks of winter vacation before first-semester exams can be administered, which may force teachers to spend several weeks catching students up rather than learning new material.

North Carolina also would lose its edge on teacher recruitment, he said. Many teachers entering the field through lateral entry – that is, professionals in other careers who want to become teachers – and rely on the current summer schedule to enroll in higher-education courses needed to complete that certification.

Furthermore, school boards adopt their school calendar based on community needs and input, and to require school systems to start after Labor Day would deny them control over their own calendars.

"Local control is something we've always had, and for someone to take that from us would be very disruptive," Stone said. "The school board and the local community should be able to decide how their calendar operates."

Stone said he understands the plight of the tourism industry, but he doesn't think education should suffer on its behalf. Besides, he said, June and July still provide prime opportunities for travel.

However, the economic impact of losing August is significant for businesses that depend on student labor and family vacations for their livelihood. A group of businesses and industries, including the Hotel and Motel Association, the N.C. Association of Realtors, the N.C. Vacation Rental Managers Association and individual resorts and restaurants are urging the General Assembly to pass legislation forcing post-Labor Day start dates.

A report by an East Carolina University professor shows that delaying the start of the school year by just 10 days would generate more than \$1 billion a year in economic growth.

"An additional \$1 billion to the state's economy will generate significant state and local tax revenue," said Stephanie Simpson, governmental affairs director of the N.C. Association of Realtors. "And with 58 cents of every tax dollar paid to North Carolina going to education, it will also put much-needed resources into our schools."

More than half of North Carolina school systems have gone on record to oppose any forthcoming post-Labor Day legislation. The issue was not on the Nash-Rocky Mount Board of Education's April meeting agenda.

Wednesday, August 31, 2005

Poll: Most favor starting classes after Labor Day

Bill mandating later school start times passed House; legislation likely to be taken up in Senate.

Associated Press

LANSING -- Nearly two-thirds of Michigan voters say they support requiring schools to wait until after Labor Day to start classes, a new poll shows.

A bill requiring the later start date passed the state House in June. Republican Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema of Wyoming supports the bill, spokesman Ari Adler said, and the legislation is likely to be taken up in a Senate committee.

About 63 percent of those polled said they favor legislation that would require schools to start classes after Labor Day, according to a poll released Thursday by Lansing-based EPIC/MRA. About 22 percent were opposed and 15 percent were undecided.

The poll of 600 likely voters statewide was conducted Aug. 15 through Sunday. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Most Michigan school districts begin classes in late August. But several districts in the past few years have made the switch to a start date after Labor Day.

At least 11 of the state's 50 largest school districts planned to begin classes after Labor Day this school year, according to a House Fiscal Agency analysis.

But not everyone thinks the legislation requiring all school districts to do the same is a good idea. Opponents of the bill say it would undermine local control of school districts. Earlier efforts to pass similar measures have failed.

Each district now sets its own start date. No public district can hold class on the Friday before Labor Day after legislators decided to create a four-day holiday weekend for schools that they hoped would boost tourism.

Why support HB 4803 to provide for Post Labor Day Schools (PLDS)?

- A landslide majority of Michigan citizens support HB 4803! A poll by EPIC-MRA in July of 2004 found an overwhelming 60% of voters favor legislation requiring all school districts to begin school AFTER Labor Day. Only 23% of respondents opposed, with the remaining 17% undecided. That same EPIC-MRA poll found 65% of parents of school age children in support of Post Labor Day Schools!
- PLDS increases tax receipts for the State of Michigan! Estimates validated by Michigan State University's Travel, Tourism & Recreation Resource Center conservatively project an additional \$10 million dollars in tax revenues coming to the State at a time they are desperately needed!
- HB 4803 helps schools save money! By adding just a few minutes to the beginning and end of each school day, school districts can cut the length of their school year by two weeks or more. School administrators don't need to staff buildings, put busses on roads and incur other operational costs during those two weeks. In fact, savings schools money was one of the major reasons why the state mandate shifted from 180 days of instruction, to 1,098 instructional hours!
- HB 4803 makes Michigan's economy stronger and provides more jobs! The Tourism industry is Michigan's second largest employer. Extending Michigan's summer season generates higher economic activity, increased tourist spending, and provides more jobs for more Michigan citizens.
- Post Labor Day Schools provides a stable workforce throughout the peak summer tourist season! Many seasonal employers report losing staff to schools starting in mid-August while peak demand is still being felt. As a result, tourists who visit our state in late August often encounter labor shortages, reduced business hours and quality control problems. HB 4803 will provide a stable workforce until season's end.
- PLDS helps increase Michigan's job base year round! Many tourism business owners depend on the money they make during the summer season to get them through the off-season months. Extending the tourism season by 25% can make the difference between a business that employs people year round and one that lays them off and closes for the winter.
- HB 4803 strengthens Michigan's second largest industry! July and August have traditionally been the months for family vacations, but over the past 20 years, more and more schools opened in mid-August, causing an average loss of two weeks of prime tourism season. Passing HB 4803 increases Michigan's summer season by an average of 25%.
- HB 4803 helps reinvigorate our state's tourism industry. Tourism is 100% dependent on discretionary spending. Brutalized by recession, the impact of world events like 9/11, fears of terrorism, gas prices and unseasonable weather, Michigan's tourism industry is coming off one of the worst 4 year periods in its history. Post Labor Day Schools provides a sorely needed boost for this state's second largest industry.
- HB 4803 provides Michigan citizens more time to vacation in their home state! Michigan is uniquely a "drive-to" destination with approximately 60-70% of tourism being generated by Michigan residents. PLDS provides more time for Michigan citizens to discover and vacation in their home state.
- The two week extension of the summer season spreads out peak demand! This has the benefit of reducing traffic patterns, increasing availability of campground sites, hotel rooms, tee times, and all kinds of vacation-related activities. A more pleasurable experience encourages tourists to return to vacation in Michigan.
- PLDS pushes vacation times into a time of year when weather is more predictable! State-wide weather patterns are more favorable for vacation activities in the latter part of August than they are in June, allowing more Michigan citizens to vacation in our state, rather than spend their vacation time and money in other states.
- HB 4803 is supported by a broad coalition of industry and business groups! Legislation to effect post Labor Day schools is supported by a wide variety of tourism groups as well as the following trade organizations:

**Michigan Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Grocers Association
Michigan Restaurant Association
Michigan Retailers Association
National Federation of Independent Business
Small Business Association of Michigan**

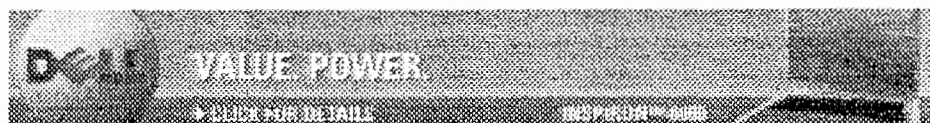
**Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds
Michigan Association of Convention & Visitor Bureaus
Michigan Association of Recreational Vehicles & Campgrounds
Michigan Boating Industries Association
Michigan Hotel, Motel & Resort Association**

**Michigan Lake to Lake Bed & Breakfast Association
Michigan Recreation & Park Association
Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan
West Michigan Tourist Association
Upper Peninsula Travel & Recreation Association**

Parents For Family Vacations

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79th LEGISLATURE

All schools could start after Labor Day under proposal

Some fear it would interrupt learning

By Alison Knezevich
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF
> Tuesday, May 17, 2005

It looks as if summers are about to get longer for students across Texas.

A proposal that appears likely to become law would require all public schools to start the Tuesday after Labor Day and end no later than June 7 beginning with the 2006-2007 school year.

Supporters of the later start date say it would save millions of tax dollars and help families spend more time together in the summers.

But some educators say the change would interfere with students' learning and local control of schools, as well as shorten breaks during the school year.

The new school dates are included in the House and Senate versions of the school finance reform legislation that has been passed. A House-Senate conference committee is working out the differences between the measures, but because the two already agree on the new school dates, they are expected to be in the final version.

Under current law, school districts can apply for waivers if they want to start before Aug. 21, said Texas Education Agency spokeswoman Debbie Graves Ratcliffe. There is no required end date, though schools are required to be in session 180 days a year.

Almost 600 of the state's 1,037 districts have asked for waivers to start the 2005-2006 school year before Aug. 21, she said. That includes the Austin school district, which asked to start on Aug. 16.

"That's the clearest evidence we have that school districts' preference is to start in mid-August," Graves Ratcliffe said.

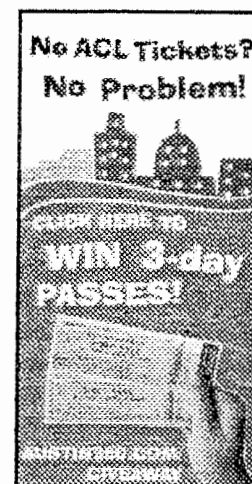
The new start date proposal would not allow for early start waivers, but districts could extend the school year beyond June 7 in cases of natural disasters and other emergencies that result in missed days.

An Austin schools spokeswoman said the district doesn't comment on whether it supports pending legislation.

The district uses "a very intricate process" to plan each year's calendar, said Austin school district calendar committee co-chairwoman Terry Morganti-Fisher, who also is the district's director of professional development.

The committee, made up of parents, principals and others, bases the start date and vacation days on factors such as religious holidays and when standardized testing is scheduled, she said. The school board has final say over the calendar.

<http://statesman.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=All+schools+could+start+...> 9/14/05



Under the new law, school districts would still decide how to configure their holiday breaks and other vacation days, Graves Ratcliffe said.

But some people said the late start would automatically interfere with the way districts have always scheduled breaks. Louis Malfaro, president of the teachers union Education Austin, said starting school after Labor Day would move final exams for the first semester to after the winter break and could cut into professional days for teachers.

"Those days are going to be sacrificed for instructional days if you have to cram more teaching into a shorter period of time," he said.

Graves Ratcliffe said the issue of administering final exams after winter break would be one of the biggest challenges for the calendar committee if the law passes.

"That's a key issue because if you do that, then it's going to make your semesters lopsided," she said, adding that the usual 10-day winter break would likely be shortened.

She also cited concerns that a later start date would interfere with standardized testing days.

But supporters of a late start said the delay would come with major economic benefits.

Last September, Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn released a report saying \$790 million could be saved annually if schools started later.

That figure was based on projections of savings from utility costs during the hot summer, child care for workers and lost income for students and teachers who work during the summers.

The report also cited losses at Texas tourist destinations, such as the Schlitterbahn water park in New Braunfels and the Alamo in San Antonio, because of a shortened summer season.

The tourism industry has long been a supporter of later academic year start dates, said Paul Serff, president of the Texas Travel Industry Association.

He said the later start would help tourist businesses and seasonal employees who could make more money if they could work through Labor Day.

Malfaro said it wasn't right to base educational decisions on business interests.

"I'm not so interested in making sure that there is a big supply of cheap labor out there for (amusement parks)," he said. "I don't think that should be driving our decisions."

Tina Bruno, executive director of the San Antonio-based Texans for a Traditional School Year, said the money saved on starting later would help schools focus on more important matters.

"It will put more money into our classrooms, where our tax dollars belong," she said.

Bruno also said the long summer "would give people more opportunity to spend a quality block of time with (their) children" and simplify the task of finding child care during holiday breaks.

Becker Elementary PTA President Mary Diaz, whose granddaughter attends the school, said she would love a longer summer even if it meant shorter holidays breaks.

"Your summer's your vacation time," she said. "You can do everything that you haven't been able to do before."

Find this article at:

<http://www.statesman.com/news/content/shared/tx/legislature/stories/05/17SCHOOLDATES.html>



Labor Day first, then school?

Sunday, September 04, 2005

By Alison Knezevich

HARRISBURG -- School bells have been ringing for days in many Pittsburgh-area classrooms, but some state lawmakers want to ensure that no Pennsylvania public school starts until after Labor Day in coming years.

A bill in the state House of Representatives would require all schools to delay the first day of school until after Labor Day -- a move the proposal's sponsors say would help the state's amusement parks, which often cut hours and lose profits when their school-aged employees return to classes before the holiday.

"The Labor Day weekend can be a make-or-break weekend for them," said Rep. Robert Godshall, R-Montgomery County, chairman of the House's committee on tourism and recreation development.

Godshall said tourism and recreation are crucial to Pennsylvania's economy, making up the state's second biggest industry after agriculture.

The idea has been circulating in state government for about two decades, said Andy Quinn, spokesman for Kennywood, Sandcastle and Idlewild parks, where hours have been slashed in the past week due to the lack of employees.

But many say local education officials need flexibility to make the right decisions about school schedules.

"They're the ones that ultimately are accountable for the performance of their students," said Tim Allwein, assistant executive director for governmental relations at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. "And they're the ones that should set the calendar, not the state."

Currently, such decisions are left up to local school districts. Across Allegheny County, the earliest start was Aug. 22; the latest, Tuesday, according to the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

Many school administrators say months of planning have gone into determining those dates.

All districts must first ensure that students get 180 days of instruction, as mandated by the state. But after that, a number of other factors come into play: Weather, teacher contracts and building renovations.

"It's a pretty interactive process," said Jody Spolar, the director of employee relations for Pittsburgh Public Schools who helps plan the calendar.

The district, whose students started Thursday, chooses start and end dates with input from principals, transportation and financial administrators, sports coaches and others, she said.

The city's schools had for years started after Labor Day, but the holiday fell so late last year that administrators broke tradition, worried that students would be stewing in hot classrooms late in June, Spolar said.

"It worked fairly well and so we did it again this year," she said.

Weather and the lack of air-conditioning in older buildings is a frequent factor in developing school calendars in other districts, too. They also must consider the possibility of snow days.

Construction is another consideration.

The Mt. Lebanon School District won't return until after Labor Day because of renovations to the elementary schools, spokeswoman Cissy Bowman said.

Students in the Baldwin-Whitehall district have been in school since Aug. 22 because the district needs a long summer next year for renovations to its high school, superintendent Donna Milanovich said.

The renovations won't be completed until 2008, so Milanovich said that would dictate the district's calendar the next few years.

"I think it needs to be a local decision," she said.

Both Godshall and Quinn said the legislation would take such factors into account.

"There's always room for exceptions to everything," Godshall said. "There are valid reasons for why somebody has to start early."

But he said that in some districts, too many vacation days during the school year are often the problem, not late starts. He has analyzed six school districts so far and found that they had an average of one vacation day for every 10 school days.

"That's a trend, and it's getting worse," he said.

Quinn said it seems schools have been starting earlier and earlier in recent years.

That has big effects on Kennywood's, Idlewild's and Sandcastle's operations, he said, because up to 85 percent of the three parks' 2,800 seasonal employees attend school.

The scant workforce at summer's end means Idlewild and Sandcastle closed last week, and Kennywood didn't open until 5 p.m., he said. All the parks are open again during the holiday weekend.

Quinn said amusement parks help fuel local economies and generate tax revenue.

Only seven states have laws mandating specific school start dates, said Sara Vitaska, an education research analyst at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

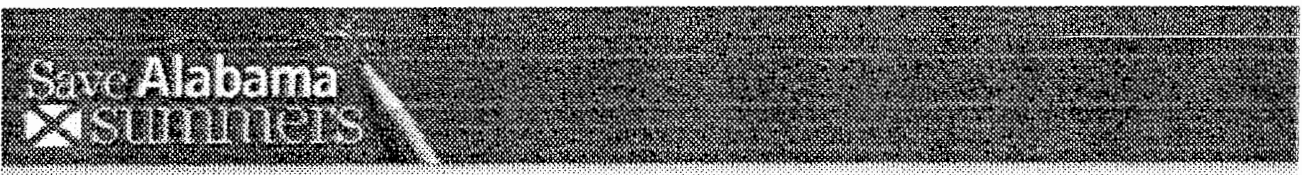
Of those states, Minnesota and Virginia require schools to start after Labor Day. In Virginia, the law is nicknamed the "Kings Dominion Law" after an amusement park there. Some states specify other dates, such as on or after Sept. 1 or Aug. 25.

More states are considering school-start laws, Vitaska said. A government committee in Tennessee has been commissioned to look at the issue, and Kentucky created a task force this year to study the effect of school calendars on the state's tourism industry.

No legislative action has been taken on the Pennsylvania bill, but the House tourism committee will discuss school start dates at an informational meeting in Harrisburg on Sept. 13.

(Alison Knezevich is an intern for the Pennsylvania Legislative Correspondents Association.)

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Bill requires post-Labor Day school start

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Judy Putnam

6/24/05

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Michigan Live: Lansing Bureau

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Against a
Late-August
School Start
Date](#)

LANSING -- Summer vacation would last until September under a measure moving in the Legislature that prohibits schools from starting classes until after Labor Day.

A bill mandating the post-Labor Day start date won easy approval, 12-2, Thursday in the House Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use and Environment Committee, which handles tourism issues.

[Early School
Start Date
Facts](#)

"The summer in Michigan is awfully short. Why should we make it any shorter?" said the bill sponsor, Rep. Ed Gaffney, R-Grosse Pointe. He said his bill would allow "one last gasp of summer."

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With assignment to the tourism committee, the House is treating it as a tourism industry issue rather than an education issue.

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An array of business groups, theme parks and hotel and restaurant owners lined up to support the measure, saying it will help supply student workers during a key part of the tourism season. It also gives families more opportunity to go Up North, resulting in more sales tax revenue for the state.

[National
Studies](#)

School groups are opposed, saying each community should decide the start date for themselves. Plus, kids are already committed to starting early with activities like football practice and band camp, some opponents argued.

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A similar push in the late '90s ended with a 1999 compromise requiring school districts to at least offer a four-day Labor Day weekend.

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Rep. David Palsrok, R-Manistee, the chair of the committee, said although the post-Labor Day start has been promoted for years by business and tourism groups, it's more likely to pass now. In 2003, lawmakers lifted a requirement that schools be in session 180 days a year. A 1,098-hour requirement remains.

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That was aimed at allowing districts to try four-day school weeks, but it also gives districts the option of shortening the school year to allow for a post-Labor Day start while still ending in early June.

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"It does give locals a little more flexibility," Palsrok said. He said he's uncertain when the full House will take up the legislation.

Don Wotruba, a lobbyist for the Michigan Association of School Boards, said boards have the ability to start after Labor Day now.

"This decision is best left up to local school boards," he said.

A decade ago, state law required a 150-day minimum for the school year, but that was ratcheted up by school reform laws aimed at improving student achievement. It peaked at 180 days in 2001-02, with many schools opting to start in August. That trend has begun to reverse with the lifting of the 180-day minimum.

Gaffney said his own district is shortening Christmas break by two days in order to start after Labor Day this fall, while another district added 12 minutes to each school day to push back the start date.

Rep. Fred Miller, D-Mount Clemens, was one of two Democrats to oppose the legislation. He said it's not going to help students.

"How much learning is going to take place in the last 12 minutes of the day?" he said.

Camille Jourden-Mark, vice president and general manager of Michigan's Adventure, a Muskegon amusement park, said upset tourists have left notes at her theme park when they show up the week before Labor Day only to find the place closed.

She said school siphons off so many of her workers that the park has to close Monday through Thursday, before opening again on the Friday before Labor Day.

"It's like a terrible Wally World experience," she said.